

VZCZCXRO7370
PP RUEHBZ RUEH DU RUEHGI RUEHJO RUEHMR RUEHRN
DE RUEH KI #0318/01 0750942
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 160942Z MAR 07
FM AMEMBASSY KINSHASA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5795
INFO RUEHXR/RWANDA COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUCNSAD/SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RHMFISS/HQ USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE PRIORITY
RUFOADA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK PRIORITY

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 KINSHASA 000318

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E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PBTS](#) [MOPS](#) [CG](#) [AG](#)
SUBJECT: CONGO ACKNOWLEDGES DISPUTED BORDER AREA IS IN
ANGOLA

REF: KINSHASA 290

11. (SBU) Summary: The DRC and Angola commissioned a technical team to clarify their common border following high-level consultations March 13 in Kinshasa. The team is charged with locating the 112 colonial-era border monuments and laying groundwork for joint control of the frontier. The delegations reviewed evidence which appeared to indicate that a disputed site in or near the Congolese territory of Kahemba is in fact part of Angola. The Congolese interior minister, who first raised questions about Angolan "incursion" into the area, said to general consternation that it is "well and truly" within Angola's borders. End summary.

12. (U) The DRC and Angola agreed to establish a bilateral technical team to define and lay the groundwork for control of their joint border following a high-level meeting March 13 in Kinshasa. The meeting was called to address a territorial dispute at the intersection of their respective provinces of Bandundu and Lunda-Norte (ref A). Congolese Foreign Minister Antipas Mbusa Nyamwisi and Angolan Foreign Minister Joao Bernardo de Miranda made the announcement following a meeting of several hours in a joint statement which called for the team to begin its work "immediately."

13. (U) The statement noted that the technical team would determine the location of 112 border monuments erected by colonial-era surveyors and pave the way for establishing joint patrols along the frontier. It stated the two governments' common understanding that there had been no change in the border, and noted that they would also reactivate a joint commission on defense and security issues. Miranda said following the meeting that the dispute was in fact a "regrettable misunderstanding."

14. (SBU) The main focus of the meeting was a review of the report of the March 2-5 joint mission to the disputed site in or near the Congolese territory of Kahemba in the southwest province of Bandundu. The report, a copy of which has been obtained by the embassy, includes GPS readings that support the Angolan claim that a 1972 private survey marker -- and not a 19th century geographic monument -- delimits the frontier. The delegations also reviewed other technical data compiled separately by experts on both sides. Members included Congolese Interior Minister Denis Kalume and Regional Integration Minister Gata Mavinga, and Angolan Interior Minister Roberto Leao Ramos Monteiro, army chief of staff General Francisco Furtado, and the heads of the Angolan national police, military intelligence and border police agencies.

15. (SBU) Press reports from both Kinshasa and Luanda suggest

the initiative to stand up the border team and security commission came from Miranda. He and other members of the Angolan delegation were received later in the day by President Kabila. The official Angolan Press Agency reported that Miranda carried a letter from dos Santos to Kabila stating Angola's commitment to reinforcing the bilateral relationship. An internal MONUC analysis dated March 7 stated that dos Santos had invited Kabila to Luanda to discuss the issue. The delegation returned to Luanda that evening.

¶6. (U) Kalume, who had first raised the issue of a foreign "incursion" into Congolese territory last month, announced after the meeting that the disputed area is in fact "well and truly" Angolan. He also said that Congolese living there had migrated illegally; this had been the Angolan position all along. This information has been received with consternation and outrage by the Kinshasa press, which has been full of nationalistic sloganeering for more than a week. However, it reflects the same general message as a column signed by the publisher of the pro-Kabila daily "l'Avenir" the day before.

¶7. (U) Kalume told the Voice of America March 13 that he planned to depart Kinshasa March 14 for Kahemba. The government press agency announced that the mission would include government experts, National Assembly deputies and reporters. No information was available regarding the travel of the technical team.

¶8. (SBU) Comment: The creation of a technical team is clearly a face-saving measure, as the Congolese have acknowledged they were in error on the border demarcation issue. End comment.

KINSHASA 00000318 002 OF 002

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